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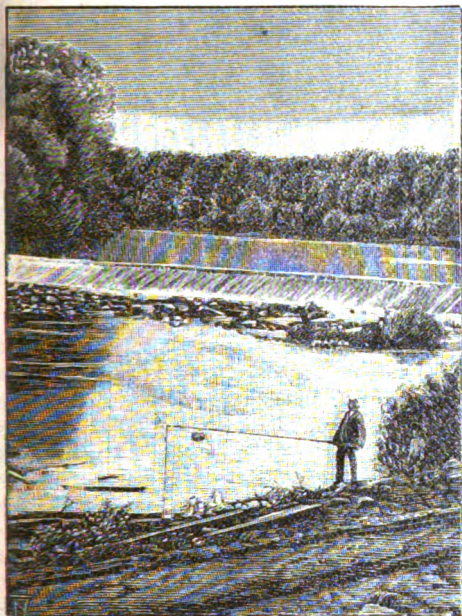
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ZOAR AND THE ZOARITES.

BY GEOFFREY WILLISTON CHRISTINE.



It was on a beautiful spring morning, and by a fast train of the Cleveland & Pittsburgh Railroad, that I left the once, but—thanks to natural gas—no longer, smoky city of Pittsburgh, for my first visit to Zoar.

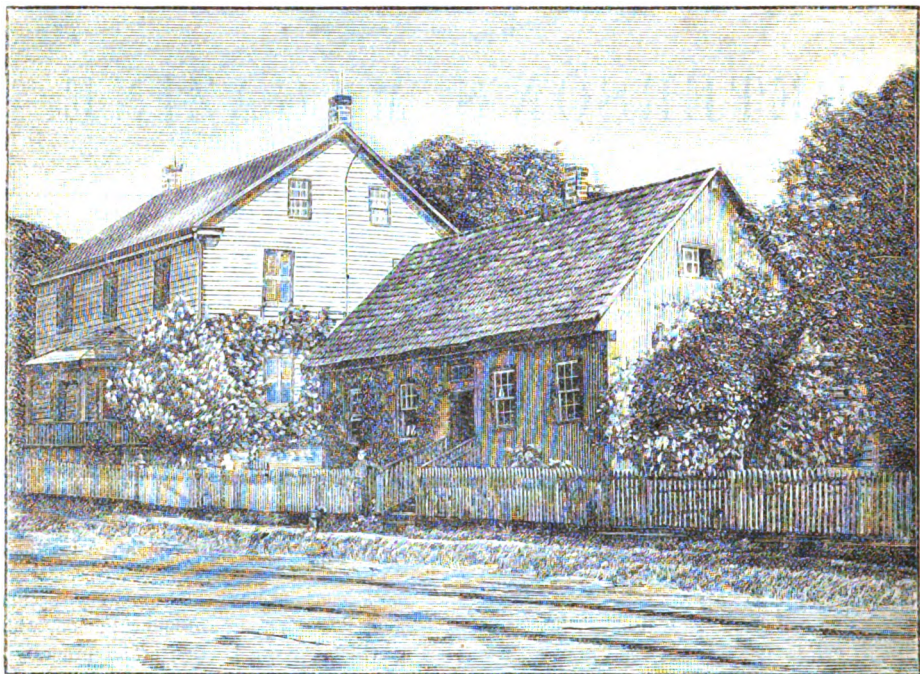
"And what and where is Zoar?" asks some curious reader. Well, Zoar is the quaintest, most interesting, and most absolutely unique village that the fastest walker among the subscribers of "Peterson" could find in all the length and breadth of our magnificent country, between sunrise and sunset on any day in the whole twelvemonth, not excepting the twenty-first of June. It is situated in Tuscarawas County, Ohio, and is owned and occupied exclusively by a most singular sect of German pietist-mystics, socialists, and communists,

known as Zoarites, who founded it in the year 1817. They emigrated from their "Fatherland" to escape religious persecution and to enjoy the privilege of worshiping God according to the dictates of their own consciences, in the New World. Down to the present time, they have continued to grow and prosper in the locality in which they first established themselves.

These good people entertain very peculiar religious doctrines, most prominent among which is a belief that the holding of all property in common was intended as a normal fundamental principle in the organization of the Christian Church, and is therefore a duty imperatively binding upon all Christians. They accordingly observe the most absolute communism in all things. They formerly practiced the most rigid celibacy as well, but discontinued it long since, and marriage is now countenanced among them, as we shall see hereafter.

Zoar is a complete little kingdom in itself, wholly independent of the outside world. Not such a very little kingdom either, for the Zoarites own seven thousand acres of land surrounding their town. Their original purchase was ten thousand acres, but three thousand have been sold from time to time, at a great advance over first cost. About one-half of their land is in a high state of cultivation, while the remainder is heavily timbered.

With the exception of tea, coffee, sugar, salt, and spices, the Zoarites produce, within the boundaries of their own estate, everything they eat, drink, and wear. Every agricultural and other implement, and every machine used in Zoar, is manufactured by the Zoarites themselves. The clothing that covers them is made by their own tailors, of cloth woven in their own mill, from wool sheared from their own sheep. The stoves that warm them and cook their food are cast in their own foundry, from iron smelted in their own furnaces, from ore



ZOARITE DWELLINGS.

found upon their own lands. Their shoes are made by their own shoemakers, from leather prepared by their own tanners, from hides obtained from their own cattle. In every department of trade, they have their own mechanics, who serve not only the Zoarite Community, but also the farmers of the surrounding country, doing all work entrusted to them in a most honest and faithful manner. Their carpenters, masons, hatters, blacksmiths, tailors, cabinet-makers, wheelwrights, and other artisans are all thoroughly skilled workmen. They possess, too, their own doctor, who is an accomplished dentist as well, having graduated in both professions at a well-known university. His office is furnished with every appliance and drug that the most advanced medical and dental science has approved.

Zoar is about ninety-four miles from Cleveland, and one hundred and six miles from Pittsburgh. It is reached by the Cleveland & Pittsburgh Railroad—a tie that binds it to both of those cities, though the station is some three miles distant from the village. The Wheeling & Lake Erie Railroad runs directly to the town and connects with Wheeling and Toledo. The Ohio Canal, along which, strange to say in this nineteenth century, freight and passengers are still carried, passes through the lower end of the village.

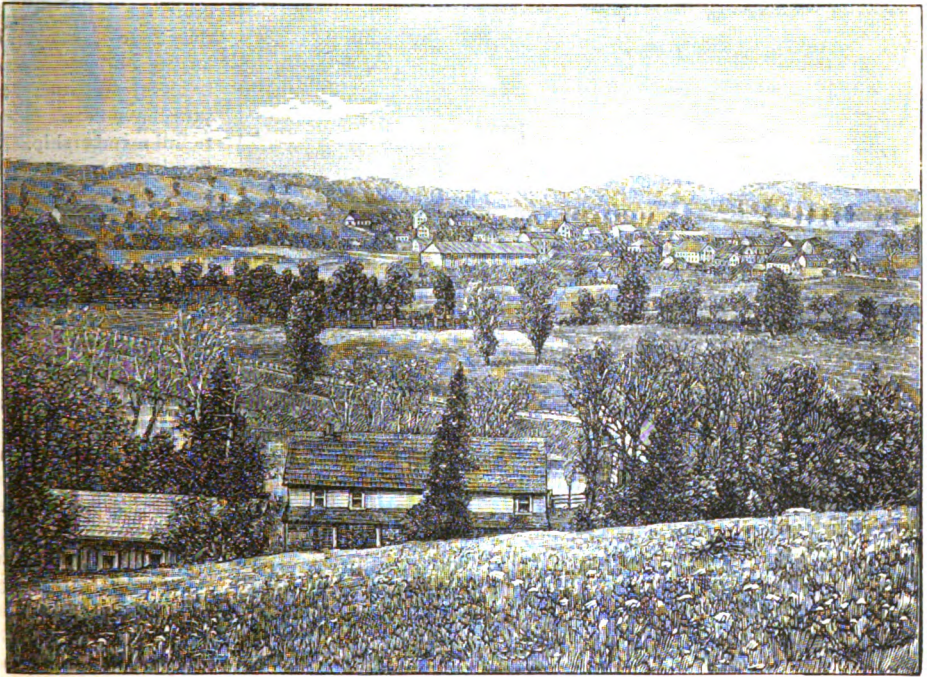
The first I see of Zoar, as I am whirled in a Zoarite spring wagon from the railway station along the banks of the Tuscarawas River, is the observatory cupola on the roof of the hotel, its whiteness glistening in the sunlight and peeping out coquettishly through the luxuriant foliage of the many trees that line our path. A few minutes more, and we are in the town, a charming place with scrupulously clean streets, sixty feet in width, crossing each other at right angles. At the corners of these thoroughfares and midway on the intervening sides, are tasteful dwellings of frame or brick, the former predominating. They are substantial double houses, two stories in height, with a door in the centre. Each dwelling has just such a spacious vine-clad porch as a tired cyclist or pedestrian delights to rest in of a hot summer day. The sides of the houses are covered by grape-vines trained on trellis-work. The Zoarites, who are famous experts in the manufacture of native wines, have found that grapes are better protected from frost and more richly ripened and sweetened by the sun when grown in this way. Each family is entitled to all the grapes grown on its property, and is provided with a small hand-press for converting them into wine, so that a grace or stirrup cup is never lacking when you visit a friend in Zoar.

We rattle past a grist-mill, a woollen-mill, a planing-mill, a foundry, a tannery, and several other manufacturing establishments, and presently come into the main street. A few steps farther on, and my young charioteer pulls up his Bucephalus before the door of a large frame structure painted white, with a massive oaken door in the centre, and surmounted by the white cupola which for some time past has been leading us on like a beacon-light. A stout man of medium height, whose face indicates some fifty years of life, and who would be a capital model for a portrait of old Simon the Cellarer, comes forward to receive me as I pass into a wide hall.

He informs me that he is the landlord and a member of the Zoar Society. Dinner is over, he tells me, but they will prepare a luncheon for me, and meanwhile would I like to go to my room?

Up a very wide oak staircase I follow my Boniface, as he bears clean towels and fresh water before me with much the same air of conscious pride as that with which the squire of some knight or baron bold might have borne his master's lance and shield in the ancient days of chivalry. We reach a neat old-fashioned chamber in a sunny corner on the second floor.

Having removed the stains of travel and done



BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF ZOAR AND VICINITY.

ample justice to a cold collation set forth in a dining-room which, like my sleeping-apartment, though somewhat primitive and old-fashioned, is scrupulously neat and clean, I am about to sally forth to see the town, when my landlord invites me first to enjoy a bird's-eye view of it from the observatory already mentioned as surmounting the roof of the hotel. From the third floor, a spiral staircase winds around a large pillar and finally brings us into a round cupola completely encircled by large windows. A view of rare loveliness is spread out at our feet. Lofty trees outline gray country roads. Soft green fields and wavy hedges fade into azure distance. Deep

purple shadows, like watchful spirits brooding upon the summits of distant blue hills, blend with the horizon. The fertile country, rich in hues of living green; the cattle upon a thousand hills; the variety of field, wood, and meadow; the clear silvery waters of the Tuscarawas River winding, serpent-like, between banks of verdure and falling in showers of spray and mist over a high dam at Zoar, like a miniature Niagara; the picturesque white houses of the town, ornamented with clinging vines, and the gayly-plumaged birds—a myriad of swift-winged atoms flitting through the air—make up a prospect well worth traveling far to see.



A ZOARITE BELLE.

Descending from the observatory, I set out for my first walk through Zoar. Directing my steps toward the bakery, where all the pies and cakes for the entire community are freshly baked each day, I encounter a most singular procession, the like of which I have never seen in any other part of the world. Some fifteen or twenty girls, ranging in age from ten to thirteen years, are walking in single file, each drawing behind her a younger brother or sister in an old-fashioned baby-coach from which projects a tongue even longer than that of the most inveterate gossip. Strict equality is observed by the Zoarites in everything. Just as they hold all property in common, so they participate in all pleasures and

duties. Thus, even the babies of the Society are aired simultaneously in a procession of "sweetness long drawn out."

Arrived at the bakery. I find posted upon its door a notice, partly printed and partly written in German, stating that Gottlieb Hassenfous and Katrina his wife, having surrendered all their worldly goods, having subscribed to the doctrines and rules of the Zoar Society, and having undergone a satisfactory probation of one year, have been admitted to full membership. The Zoarites are desirous, as they always have been, of receiving new members, and all persons of good moral character who will fulfill the requirements named above may become joint heirs of this village of Zoar and all the other possessions of the Society.

Pushing aside the heavy piece of oak to which this notice is attached, I pass through the living-room of the baker and his family, into the bakery proper, and here I am deeply impressed by the scrupulous neatness which

universally prevails. If any people in the world practically endorse old John Wesley's saying that "Cleanliness is next to Godliness," these people are the Zoarites. In the baking of their bread, the brewing of their beer, and the slaughtering of their cattle, their chief object seems to be the attainment of the highest possible degree of cleanliness.

The baker and his assistant are attired in spotless white caps and aprons, and the dough looks so inviting as it is spread out upon the long kneading-boards that an excessively hungry man might almost be tempted to eat it before it is baked, and then, like Oliver Twist, "ask for more." From seventy-five to one hundred loaves



OLD LOG CHURCH.

are consumed by the Zoarites daily. At the hour when the bread comes fresh from the oven, each household dispatches one of its young women to the bakery with a large snow-white cloth in which she receives and wraps the family supply and bears it home. It was a charming sight to see these beves of young girls, tastefully attired in neatly fitting chintz gowns and having the good looks which are the offspring of good health, good diet, and out-door exercise, sparkling in their eyes, lips, and cheeks. They come trooping into the bakery, receive their allotted supply, and depart with it in its spotless covering, laughing and chatting meanwhile in the high spirits and good humor of robust young womanhood.

But perhaps the young women of Zoar are seen to the best advantage at the stables, whither they all repair twice each day to milk the cows. A considerable portion of the Zoarites' wealth is invested in their live stock. They have devoted much attention to determining what are really the best breeds. After long experiment with the Alderney, Holstein, Jersey, and Durham, they have decided in favor of the last-named, though all four varieties are well represented in their herds.

The stables in which these cattle are kept are models of their kind. Their drainage, ventilation, and facilities for light are perfect, and every

device that ingenuity can suggest and an unlimited expenditure carry out has been utilized to make their sanitary condition as perfect as possible. The stalls extend in long rows on either side of broad aisles. The name of each animal is painted above her resting-place, and the surprise of the visitor, upon reading such fanciful appellations as "Maud," "Lily," "Ethel," and "Rose," fades away when he learns that each young woman has the privilege of naming the cows she milks. I may remark, "en passant," that cheap reprints of popular English novels are not unknown in Zoar, and that many a Zoarite damsel finds time to build elaborate air-castles upon no firmer foundation than the works of Miss M. E. Braddon or Mary Cecil Hay.

I would not like to vouch that the Zoarite cows can read, but, when they come filing into the stables at morn or eventide, they go to their stalls with as much certainty and directness and with as little hesitancy or confusion as if they recognized their own names painted above them. The cattle safely housed, in come the damsels to milk them. Fancy some thirty merry, romping, buxom girls, each bearing a milking-stool and wearing a long white apron. Every girl has a partner, and to each pair thus formed there are assigned eight cows which they must always milk.

All manufacturing in Zoar is done by water power. The Tuscarawas River, by means of a dam, is made to flow with sufficient volume and swiftness to supply from thirty to forty horsepower to the various mills and factories, all of which are provided with machinery made by the Zoarites themselves in the large millwright shop which they have always maintained. One of the principal products of the Zoarites' lands is flour, of which, after supplying their own wants, they ship large quantities to Washington, Baltimore, Cleveland, and Pittsburgh. The cloths, flannels, and blankets woven in their woolen-mill are of excellent quality, while the first-named are of a variety of tasteful patterns.

The dress of the men is in no way peculiar, and the most distinctive feature of the feminine costume is a quilted sunbonnet, which all the women and girls wear for "full dress" at church and on state occasions.

Zoarite tables are bountifully supplied, the cooking is excellent, and the beer quaffed at meals is of a kind that might tempt the most rigid anachorite to break his vows. Nothing whatever enters into its composition save barley-malt, hops, and pure spring-water. Like the cider manufactured and consumed here in great quantities, and the magnificent beeves slaughtered daily, it is kept in a common stock, from which

each family is supplied every morning, according to its needs.

The principal diversion that I enjoyed, during my stay at Zoar, was the annual cleaning of two large fish-ponds. These were stocked with carp some two years ago by the Fish Commissioners of the United States and the State of Ohio. Thoroughly to cleanse these ponds, as is done every spring and autumn, it is necessary to draw off the water and remove the fish, an operation that affords the keenest delight to the unsophisticated Zoarite mind.

Within a few minutes' walk of the hotel, there is a fine public garden and greenhouse, both of which are always open. There is no prohibitory "No Admittance" or "Hands Off" upon anything. Everyone is free to enter at any time and roam about at will. The garden is tastefully laid out and contains some noble trees and elegant shrubbery, while the greenhouse boasts a large collection of choice plants and flowers. In my frequent visits to those delightful resorts, I usually met Mr. Simon Beiter, the gardener and florist of the Society and one of its principal officers. In long talks with him, I learned all there is to know of the origin, religious doctrines, social and religious customs, of the Zoar Society, as well as interesting anecdotes and reminiscences of its founder and his first disciples.



THE NEW BRICK CHURCH.

It was in the kingdom of Würtemberg, near the close of the eighteenth century, that a young school-teacher, named Joseph Bimeler, began to speak on religious subjects twice every Sunday, to such friends and neighbors as cared to assemble in his house to listen. His doctrines somewhat resembled those of the Quakers, like whom he always used "thee" and "thou" and other "plain language"; but he held very strange mystical opinions concerning celibacy and community of goods, both of which he strongly advocated. His adherents soon numbered nearly four hundred, and their refusal to pay any dues to the established church and to address the nobility or magistracy by any title save plain "thee" and "thou" subjected them to fine and imprisonment, Bimeler himself escaping the latter only by removing from place to place and living in the utmost privacy.

Johannes Goesele, Bimeler's right-hand man, was held a prisoner for nine years by the Duke of Würtemberg for refusing to take off his hat to him and to address him save with the disrespectful "thou" of the German. His long confinement made him famous, and on one occasion the duke took Napoleon I to see him. Goesele treated the emperor just as he had treated the duke, and warned him of the dread account he should have to render at the Last Great Day for the multitude of souls hurried into eternity by his bloody wars.

Much annoyed, Napoleon desired to have Goesele punished for his insolence; but, when the Man of Destiny had departed, the duke summoned his prisoner before him and set him at liberty, saying: "Goesele, if you had not talked to the emperor as you talk to me, I would have taken off your head: but now, since you treat us both alike, you may go home."

Aided by English Quakers, Bimeler and his disciples emigrated to this country in August, 1817. With the assistance of Friends in Philadelphia, they purchased, at a fair price and upon long credit, the site of their present town of Zoar and ten thousand acres of surrounding land, where they established themselves in December of that same year. Here, after a period of frightful hardship, they soon attained great prosperity.

Though not deeming themselves sufficiently advanced in the Christian life consistently to practice celibacy and community of goods, they resolved to make trial of the former. Accordingly, there was no marrying among them—and those that had wives were as though they had none—for seven years. Then they abandoned celibacy, and Bimeler himself set the example

of taking a wife. Marriage has continued a favorite institution among them ever since. Community of goods they adopted at the end of their first year in Zoar, and they have ever since practiced the most absolute communism.

Bimeler based his practice of celibacy upon the mystical notion of the German philosopher, Jacob Boehmen, and the theosophists of his school, that Adam was originally a dual being, and that, after the separation of his feminine nature in the person of Eve, all marital association between the sexes was contrary to God's original intention, and therefore to be avoided. He found authority for the practice of communism in the account given of the primitive Christians, in Acts iv, 32: "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common."

Bimeler's government of the Zoarites was strictly patriarchal. Throughout his lifetime, he was the absolute civil and religious head of the Community—its prophet, priest, king, and the dictator of all its rules and regulations.

Since his death, in 1853, at the advanced age of more than eighty years, the Society has been governed by a board of three trustees and a standing committee of five, chosen by ballot from among the members, the women being allowed an equal vote with the men. Trustees are elected for three years, committeemen for five.

Though long since abandoned, the old log church built under Bimeler's direction, in 1817, is still standing. Even the new church by which it was replaced, the year of Bimeler's death, is very primitive, standing on a gentle eminence and almost concealed by trees. It is a one-story building, entered by two doors in the rear of the pulpit, so that late comers must walk to their seats in full view of the congregation. Instead of pews, it has old oaken "settles," made softer by home-made calico-covered cushions, and its floor is adorned with rag carpet. One side of the auditorium is reserved for men, the other for women, and each sex must enter by the door of its own side.

There are almost countless other points of interest connected with Zoar and the Zoarites which the limits of this article forbid me to touch upon; but, if I have excited in the mind of the reader a desire to know more of this most singular place and people, he may easily gratify it by paying them a visit, which will amply reward him for any trouble or expense he may thereby incur.